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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS, USEUCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2016

TAGS: ASEC MOPS PREL CD

SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS LEAVE--INTACT

REF: A) N'DJAMENA 1259 B) N'DJAMENA 1268

Classified By: PolOff John O'Leary. Reasons 1.5 (b) & (d)

¶1. (U) Rebel forces continue their withdrawal, so far eluding any attempt by the Chadian National Army (ANT) to intercept them. Reports indicate that this morning they were only 90 KM from the Central African Republic and were heading toward CAR rather than directly back to Sudan, thus avoiding the ANT blocking force in the vicinity of Goz Beida (1213 N; 2125 E). There is speculation that they may try to establish a base of operations in northeastern CAR, but they could also move into Darfur.

¶2. (C) French sources put the rebel column at 50 to 60 vehicles with 400 to 600 troops, sufficient to raid but not to attack and hold heavily defended towns such as Mongo (1211 N; 1842 E) or N,Djamena.

¶3. (C) Arrayed against the rebel column was a Chadian army of 10 to 15 thousand men with air support and French air reconnaissance. A DAO source stated that pursuing ANT forces had been ordered to attack and destroy--with impunity--any rebel force they encountered. The Chadian government has reoccupied all towns that had fallen to the rebels. The 1st PSI battalion has redeployed back to the vicinity of N,Djamena.

¶4. (SBU) N,Djamena has returned to normal with pedestrians and bicycles jockeying for road space with cars and mopeds, street vendors reoccupying their stalls, and workers going back to their jobs. Tanks and APCs are gone, though a heavy military presence remains. The Embassy is lifting restrictions on nighttime activities, but reminding personnel and family members to be alert. According to the UN Security Officer, the UN has authorized their families that wish to do so to leave; and expatriate workers in the East are being encouraged to take leave. The UN has not mandated departure of any employees or family members.

¶5. (C) Radio France International and local sources indicate that the GOC has arrested military officers from the Goran and Arab ethnic groups, presumably for assisting the rebels. This has not been confirmed but could tie into reports of arrests and summary executions previously reported by DAO following the ANT defeat at Hadjer Mufane last month. There is an unconfirmed report that an ANT colonel in Mongo defected to the rebels.

¶6. (C) It appears that weapons distributed yesterday by the government went to members of President Deby's Zaghawa tribe, possibly to engage in a last ditch defense of the regime, but more likely to defend against or forestall retribution from non-Zaghawas in the event of regime change. Observers are concerned that these weapons will either be

stolen or sold--in any case, that they will fall into the hands of evildoers and trigger an upsurge in violent criminal activity.

¶7. (C) Comment. Despite the government's apparent victory, the fact remains that a large column of rebels penetrated into the heart of Chad and is leaving unscathed. Whether this demonstration will encourage other rebel groups to try a similar advance, or will even encourage the disparate rebel groups to cooperate, remains to be seen. The ANT's response to the rebel incursion was to fortify towns along the possible invasion route, using significant number of troops and materiel. Whether the rebels can exploit such a Maginot mentality also remains to be seen. What appears certain, however, is that the ANT lacks sufficient mobility to run down its enemy. End comment.

¶8. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
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